1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Georgia but still retained many pleasant recollections of the days of her early youth. She had heard of many African customs and went on to tell us some of these.

"I heahd many time bout how in Africa wen a girl dohn lack jis lak dey should, dey drum uh out uh town. Dey jis beat duh drum, an call uh name on duh drum an duh drum say bout all duh tings she done.[26] Dey drum an mahch long an take duh girl right out uh town.

"Girls hab tuh be keahful den. Dey caahn be so triflin lak some ub em is now. In Africa dey gits punished. Sometime wen dey bin bad, dey put um on duh banjo. Dat wuz in dis country."

This being "put on duh banjo" was unintelligible to us and we asked for an explanation.

"Wen dey play dat night, dey sing bout dat girl an dey tell all bout uh. Das puttin uh on duh banjo. Den ebrybody know an dat girl sho bettuh change uh ways."

The story of flying Africans was a familiar one to the old woman and she said that her mother had often told her the following incident which was supposed to have taken place on a plantation during slavery times.

"Duh slabes wuz out in duh fiel wukin. All ub a sudden dey git tuhgedduh an staht tuh moob roun in a ring. Roun dey go fastuhnfastuh. Den one by one dey riz up an take wing an fly lak a bud.[68b, 69c] Duh obuhseeuh heah duh noise an he come out an he see duh slabes riz up in duh eah an fly back tuh Africa. He run an he ketch duh las one by duh foot jis as he wuz bout tuh fly off. I dohn know ef he wuz neah nuff tuh pull um back down an keep um frum goin off."

As we left, Priscilla accompanied us down the walk to the gateway. She was reluctant to see us go and until the last minute regaled us with a variety of stories.

We had learned that an elderly Negro named Lawrence Baker * lived out on the Ridge Road near the Ridgeway Club.

* *Lawrence Baker, the Ridge Road, near Darien.*

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

it's dis way. My master call me up, and order me a short peck of corn and a hundred lash. My friends see it, and is sorry for me. When dey come to de praise-meeting dat night dey sing about it."[3]

The slaves' loyalty was to the Praise House rather than to the Baptist church few of them ever attended. Even during Northern occupation and after the Civil War, Gullahs continued to gather at the Praise House whenever trouble befell their community. Despite the fact that white Baptist churches were almost completely under black control during the war (in terms of both structure and organization), the source of power on the plantations was still the Praise House. And after the war, Gullahs continued to see it as the center of group life and to conduct themselves according to Praise House customs and regulations.[4]

Since the Praise House congregation consisted of families who knew, through daily contact, the personal life of a candidate, it was possible to scrutinize behavior and to ostracize an individual, not so much on purely religious grounds as for breaches of trust within the quarters. Elders and members exerted great disciplinary power over plantation hands, having the right to "turn dem outen de Pray's House if dey ain't fur walk right." Hence, while the Gullahs probably attached little significance to church disciplinary measures instituted by the master, but which they, as Praise House members, were forced to implement, a crime against one of their own was a different matter. Long after slavery, the Praise House continued effectively to hold its members responsible for good behavior, and the influence of these small units of the church has long been credited for the fact that crimes were rarely committed among Gullahs. In the 1920s the Beaufort sheriff stated that the Praise Houses kept Gullahs law-abiding even as freedpeople, "because the Negro fears the Lord more than he fears the law." Yet it was not "fear" so much as a desire for harmony and a sense of love and respect for each other that allowed Gullahs to maintain integrity in the community. The significance of Praise House loyalty and community membership as a social regulating force has been observed by researchers as late as the 1970s.[5] Existence of these plantation meetinghouses conformed to the desires of slaveholders, but they also served to strengthen bonds of kinship and a sense of commonwealth among the Gullahs.

Gullahs often expressed time in terms of before or after they "had sense." The concept puzzled Northern teachers who worked among them during the Civil War. "Catching sense," as the Gullahs called it, a term still used today on some Sea Islands, refers to the time when a person

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina

of Plantation Membership on St. Helena Island, South Carolina," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1977).

5. *SCA*, July 28, 1843; Rupert Holland, ed. *Letters and Diary of Laura M. Towne* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969; repr. from 1912 ed.) 162; Rev. Augustine Roots to Rev. Jocelyn, February 8, 1863, AMA; Wooster, *Black Yeomanry*, 243–54; Jenkins Mikell, *Rumblings of the Chariot Wheels* (Columbia: The State Co., 1923), 138; Lawton, "Religious Life," 62–63, 69–72; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," Chapters 4 and 5.

6. Towne Diary, passim; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–97, 117–18; Elsie Clews Parsons, *Folk-lore of the Sea Islands of South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass: American Folk-lore Society, 1923), 205–6; Lawton, "Religious Life," 61–23, 69–70.

7. Lawton, "Religious Life,". 61–63; Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 95–118. The Praise House membership consisted of households. These units were not always filial and might consist of several "outside children." Yet if these children "caught sense" in that household, they were members of that plantation. They were also members of the Praise House, could be buried in the plantation graveyard, and after slavery, could use the land. Plantation members tried to keep nonmembers off the land. Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 116–22.

8. Pierce, "Negroes at Port Royal," 305; Towne Diary, 55; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1863), 167–68; Rev. W. T. Richardson to Rev. Jocelyn, August 7, 1863, AMA; Arthur Sumner to Nina Hartshorn, May 18, 1862, Penn School Papers, vol. 4, SHC.

9. Diary of William F. Allen, William F. Allen Family Papers, 1775–1937, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 106–7, 145, 164; Elizabeth Hyde Botume, *First Days Amongst the Contrabands* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1968, repr. from 1893 ed.), 125–26; Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* (New York: Collier Books, 1962, repr. from 1870 ed.), 48; Elizabeth Ware Pearson, *Letters from Port Royal* (New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1969, repr. from 1906 ed.), 198; Charlotte Forten "Life on the Sea Islands," Part I, *Atlantic Monthly* 13 (May, 1864): 592.

10. Guthrie, "Catching Sense," 55–57, 119–23; Grace Bigelow House, "The Little Foe of All the World," *Southern Workman* 35 (1906): 603; Wister, "Recollections," 14; Allen Diary, 45; Towne Diary, 13.

11. Ruth Finnegan, *Survey of the Limba People of Northern Sierra Leone* (London: HMS, 1965), 69–80; Robert T. Parsons, *Religion in an African Society*, 99–100; Folkways Research Series, *The Traditional History and Folklore of the Gola Tribe in Liberia*, 2 vols. (Monrovia: Dept. of the Interior, 1961) II: 55–56; Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighborhood of Sierra Leone*, 2 vols. (London: Frank Cass, 1969; repr. from 1803 ed.) I: 211; Wyatt MacGaffey, *Custom and Government in the Lower Congo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 103.

12. Mikell, *Chariot Wheels*, 139–41.

13. W. T. Harris and Harry Sawyerr, *The Springs of Mende Belief and Conduct: A Discussion of the Influence of the Belief in the Supernatural among the Mende* (Freetown: Sierra Leone University Press) 103; W. C. Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu: A Sympathetic Study of the Magico-Religious Practices and Beliefs of the Bantu Tribes of Africa* (Newport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970, originally published 1928), 393.

14. *Minutes, Beaufort Baptist Church*, 271–72, BC; James R. Stuart Recollections, n.d., circa 1850, 2–4, SHC; *SCA*, June 26, 1843; Holland, *Towne Letters and Diary*, 162, 145; Cooley, *School Acres*, 148–49; Charles A. Raymond "The Religious Life of the Negro Slave," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 27 (September, 1863): Part I, 479.